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SOCIAL PROCEDURE IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

CHARLES ROBERT GASTON

Richmond Hill High School, New York City

The principal of one of our successful normal colleges means two things when he speaks of the socialization of the English work. He means the socializing of the content of the work in composition, grammar, and literature and the socializing of the procedure in the classroom. He means (1) the fitting of the subject-matter of the English work closely into the present-day thoughts and lives of the students—the relating of the English work closely to the community life, and (2) the conduct of the recitation largely by the students themselves, with the teacher as guide—the conduct of the recitation by a pupil as a member of an active social group.

It would be folly to substitute devices for a principle or paraphernalia for an attitude, but it may not be futile to glance at certain simple illustrations of social activities in classroom procedure. Of course these are given only as illustrations. Progressive schools of the country, north, west, east, and south, can offer other kinds of illustrations of classroom social activities.

As part of the student activity of the classroom, it is common for teachers to have a secretary's report of the preceding meeting read as the first number on the program at each meeting. The following report may give a partial idea of the range of student activity.

In the report, the purpose of the instructor to get the students roused to personal activity while he remains in the background as

one of the social group will probably be sufficiently clear without comment. Regarding the nature of the subject-matter the purpose will also perhaps be sufficiently clear—to rouse an interest in a play as a play, through the analyzing of propositions connected with the structure and stage presentation of the play.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

The forty-fourth meeting of the 4B English class was opened by the leader giving the voice drill. Following this, Secretary Rhodebeck read his report for the preceding meeting. There were no serious mistakes brought out when he asked the usual questions on completing his reading: "What errors in fact did you notice, Mr. Wardlaw? What criticisms have you on my reading and posture, Miss Blydenburgh?" The chairman said that on the whole the secretary's report was a very good summary of the trial of the preceding day.

After the report, the leader called on the instructor to frame the assignment for the next day. This lesson will continue the series in argumentative problems agreed upon by the class.

Following this, Mr. Young and Miss Blydenburgh had their debate: "The climax of *Macbeth* comes during the banquet scene in the third act at the moment when Macbeth first sees the ghost of Banquo." Mr. Young took the affirmative side, and Miss Blydenburgh the negative. Mr. Young said that the questions to be decided were: (1) Is the climax at the place where the ghost first appears? (2) Does the climax come at any other place in the play? The affirmative speaker argued that the climax does come at the place where the ghost of Banquo first appears. Miss Blydenburgh said that the climax comes in Act III, Scene iv, where the news of Fleance's escape is brought to Macbeth. Miss Blydenburgh presented her side more convincingly, and so won the debate, according to the vote of the class.

Following this, the teacher was called upon by the chairman to give his criticisms. He said that the first point was only a repetition of the proposition. Mr. Young then tried to justify himself by saying that Miss Blydenburgh in their preliminary conference made him take this as the first point to be discussed. The class smiled at this. The teacher then told us that the determination of the exact climax didn't greatly matter. He thought there were two climaxes: the first, a scenic climax, or the point of view of spectators, which comes at the banquet scene; and the second, a logical climax, which comes at the point where news of Fleance's escape is brought to Macbeth. He said that the important matter was for us to think of the play as we had seen it on the stage and to realize where on that occasion we had been most excited and had felt things were at their height. To each of the speakers the chairman then handed the slips written by the class and containing lists of words mispronounced and comments on posture, enunciation, etc.

After the debate, the rest of the time was given to consideration of the issues involved in two other propositions on *Macbeth*: First, *Macbeth* is suitable for presentation in whole or in part by members of our class; and second, in any performance of *Macbeth* the part of Lady Macbeth should be taken by a large, full-faced, strong-chinned, red-haired lady. For the latter proposition, Mr. Walker suggested that the points to be determined were: Would such a description fit the facts in the play? Would Macbeth have cared for such a lady?

These topics were the basis for lively conversation. In the conversation, it was suggested that one of the boys see the manager of the Garden Theater and ask if *Macbeth* could be put on soon.

The bell then rang, and the class adjourned. There were no students absent.

Respectfully submitted,
FLORENCE WIMMEL, *Secretary*

This account of a socialized procedure on a specified day in a single class may be open to the objection that it does not show complete socialization of content. That, however, is not the point of the present discussion. By a stenographic report of any one of many recitation periods in a school where the English work is socialized both in content and procedure, I might give an idea of the socialization of content. I might offer reports of interviews that boys and girls had had with parents regarding books read during a semester (*As You Like It*, *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, Stevenson's *Travels with a Donkey*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*), I might reproduce classroom conversations regarding Y.M.C.A. work among soldiers, or give an account of a week's campaign in English classes leading to the pledging of most of the boys to earn \$10.00 for the Y.M.C.A., or tell of the Liberty Loan and War Savings dialogues and dramatizations. Just now I am merely trying to give a slight idea of what one teacher means by socialized classroom procedure.

The ideas that a certain student, Thomas Young, has regarding the meaning of the socialized recitation are as follows:

There are three ways of conducting a recitation in the high school. One way is having the teacher in absolute and continual leadership of the class. Another way is to conduct a recitation under the leadership of a pupil in absolute control. The third way is to put a pupil in charge of the class and have the teacher take part as an adviser and helper.

By the socialized recitation we mean at Richmond Hill High School the following things: Every day, after consultation with the class, the instructor

assigns for the next day a definite lesson on a definite subject in a textbook or on a subject not in the textbook. He then asks a group of questions on the topic assigned or assists the class in framing a set. A leader, a secretary, and a reader or a speaker are then named in regular order; the pupils whose turn it is to act in these capacities go to the board and write their names there. This assignment is taken down in systematic form in the notebooks.

Next day, the leader takes the chair set apart for him and with the aid of his notebook conducts the meeting. He calls for the secretary's report and asks the reader or speaker to do his part. Then he calls on members of the class to recite on the questions of the day's assignment or to take up the problem on which the class is working. During the meeting, any pupil may ask a question or criticize a statement by parliamentary procedure or good-mannered conversation.

Social procedure in the correction of blackboard work, in the correction of notebooks, in dramatizations, in discussion of three-minute talks, in the testing of memory selections, etc., offers many opportunities for teachers and classes. Perhaps someone may be interested in the following accounts by pupils:

SOCIAL-GROUP CORRECTING IN BOARD WORK

Early this term our teacher instituted a new form of blackboard-work correction. A representative of each of the five groups was chosen by the group members to write on the blackboard on a topic assigned by the leader for the day. The group leaders were assigned to write an account of this new method of doing blackboard work, while the other members of the group were assigned to watch and correct the work of their group representative at the blackboard.

While the persons at the board were writing, the members of their groups offered criticisms from time to time. Some of those at the board had to begin their work over again, since their opening sentences did not have a close connection to the topic assigned. Some had to omit portions. Errors in punctuation and spelling were corrected. At the completion of the blackboard work each writer reported what help he or she had obtained from the members of the group. These are the names of the groups: "L'Etoile," "We Girls," "Handsome Four," "Ambitious Four," "The Liberty Five."

ABRAHAM FRANZBLAU

SOME OTHER ACTIVITIES OF THE GROUPS

For the purpose of aiding every member, the eighth-term English class has formed itself into social groups. Thus the members have become a very good aid to each other and at the same time to the teacher. Each group is composed of about six members chosen according to seating, according to fitness for

mutual helpfulness in the judgment of the teacher, or according to individual preferences of the pupils. The groups then hold a meeting and choose leaders. The leaders form a committee that has in its charge the social work of the class.

There are several ways in which this social work is carried on in the class recitation. One interesting way is by having everyone write a theme and then having the members exchange papers to correct mistakes. Another use of the social groups that serves to keep the interest of everyone alive is dramatization. Every term there is a play to be read in the course of the English work. The groups take turns in dramatizing the most important parts of every day's lesson while the play is being read. Another use is the presentation of charades. The groups take turns in producing charades that represent the names of authors, or books, or even characters in a book that has been studied. The members of the class who do not take part guess the charades. A fourth procedure is to have a current-events program. We select a certain day, about every two weeks, when the whole lesson may be devoted to the news of the day. The leader of the group chosen to present that program acts as chairman for the day. He sees to it that every member has a topic to speak on that is of general interest. The weekly inspection of notebooks provides a fifth phase of the work done by the social groups. During the course of the English supervised-study period, every group corrects its own notebooks and then the teacher looks over the letter of inspection to detect mistakes. A sixth plan for this social work is that of editing a class story-book. Every group meets and decides upon a type of story. Some very interesting stories result. Each group leader looks over the stories in order to find mistakes that are not desired in the class story-book. The group leaders hold a meeting while the stories are on their way and select one of the leaders for the editor-in-chief, who superintends the editing of the book.

LILLIAN HOPKINS

What assists in making a social procedure effective in some schools is that for every meeting of the class there is a definite, clear-cut plan or program, which the leader has only to carry out as well as possible. In our particular school the notebook system helps to bind together our work, but that is another story (see *English Journal*, April, 1915).

An element that appears to be a weakness turns out to be a pillar of strength. Pupils are taken as leaders absolutely without favor and in regular turn. The teacher has to do no bookkeeping for this; the pupils arrange the daily assignment of officers for the meeting. The bright, lively, vivacious, clear-thinking, capable students have no monopoly on the leadership. Every person gets his turn. By alertness and resourcefulness, the teacher is able to

help the timid, backward leader to make the time of the class meeting count for something. Instead of being a waste of time, a period under such a shrinking leader becomes a triumph of democracy. The recitation is not felt by the class to have been flat, stale, and unprofitable; even a chance visitor who might drop in would admit the same, though he came with hostile attitude.

For the teacher the advantages of socialized procedure appear to be:

1. Cutting down of teacher's nerve strain
2. Lessening of teacher's talking
3. Freeing of teacher for observation of pupils when speaking and acting as they do among themselves
4. Freeing of teacher for personal approach to pupils during recitation period
5. Shifting of point of view, so that pupils *ask* for assignment of work and for teacher's help in settling troublesome questions

For the pupils the advantages are:

1. Developing of freedom in use of language
2. Developing of good manner among equals
3. Developing of sense of proportion
4. Developing of initiative
5. Developing of co-operative spirit

Whether the advantages are offset by disadvantages, so that such socialized procedure as has been described is not worth what it costs, is a question that might be settled thus: Let a teacher conduct one class socially as described and another directly. Let her test each class by some standard test. After a fixed time, let her test the classes again to see which shows the better results according to the standard tests. There will be some elements which have not been tested and thus far are not capable of being tested: elements of the spirit, such as initiative and co-operation. However, from the results of the tests inferences may perhaps be drawn regarding these elements. The tests at least will show the absolute attainments of the pupils after fixed periods of time spent in the two different methods of procedure.

Meanwhile let the teachers who as a matter of experience think the social procedure in the English classroom worth while propose

by observation of their own class meetings the answers to the following questions:

1. What do you consider to be the function of the teacher in the classroom?
2. Just what do you mean by the socialized recitation? (Have stenographic reports made of every word uttered during a socialized recitation period.)
3. Are your pupils in favor of the socialized recitation as you conduct it?
4. Does the social procedure reduce the amount of time which you have to spend on school work outside of the classroom?
5. Do you secure accuracy in the written work of your students?
6. How do your students get drill in being accurate orally?
7. At the close of the day, when you think back over the day's work, how much time do you consider to have been wasted?
8. How do you make each project fit into a progressive plan of development of the pupil in: (a) composition? (b) literature?
9. With the social procedure are you able to cover the essentials that you set up for accomplishment in a given time?
10. How do you deal with the problem of having all the class participate in the work?
11. How do you prevent the spending of time on irrelevant points?
12. What incentive have your pupils for the accomplishment of tasks that you set them or that they set for themselves?
13. What happens in your classroom when a heavy, slow student has his turn as chairman?
14. How do you see that errors overlooked by the class are corrected?
15. How do you make up for the loss of the quiet spirit or the driving force found when you are the focus-point of all the pupils?
16. How can you grade the pupils' work from day to day?
17. How do you get along with a socialized procedure when your class consists of lively, turbulent boys?